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1 July 1975

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: CIA's Future Debated

1. As part of a two-day seminar (24-25 June) on Strategic Intelligence and National Security, the Industrial College of the Armed Forces put on a panel session composed of General Vernon Walters; Ray Cline; Bill Miller, the Director of the Church Committee Staff; and Harry Howe Ransom, the leading academic expert on the CIA. The session turned into something of a debate on the future of the CIA. General Walters and Ray Cline presented rather strong defenses of our present foreign intelligence organization and the general scope of its activities, while Miller and Ransom, although paying lip service to the vital importance of strategic intelligence, contended that there was considerable need for broad change in its present organization and scope. The difference in view between Walters and Cline and Miller and Ransom sprung essentially from their differing perceptions of the current threat posed to the U.S. by the Communist world.

2. In a ringing defense of the Agency's product and importance, Walters depicted the U.S. security threat as the most serious since World War II and on the increase. Cline more or less endorsed this view and contended that much of the present atmosphere of criticism of the Agency springs from an overemphasis on detente in the U.S. With the public sold on the notion that the threat has declined, a basis for challenging the extent and need for our present intelligence mechanism has arisen. In Cline's view, this challenge has now reached the destructive level with the Agency's high command preoccupied with the investigation and the process of strategic intelligence just barely "ticking over." Moreover, no one is listening to what the intelligence producers have to say, partly because the investigation has subtly called into the question of the quality of the intelligence product. Cline contended that the quicker we get out of this "trough of examining our

entrails in public," the better off we will be. Cline expressed the fear that one result of the present investigations would be to seriously damage our human collection system. Our ability to "see inside people's heads" has been as vital to the security of the country over the years as technical intelligence. Congress needs to expressly recommit the Agency to human collection in any revision of the Agency's charter.

3. Miller's presentation, which followed, was in sharp contrast to Cline and Walters. Miller is a youngish, soft spoken individual somewhat the image of the classic foreign service officer. He delivered his remarks in a kind of sadness rather than anger tone. His approach to the issues can be sensed from some of the following quotes:

--"The issue before Congress is to what extent we can permit intelligence activities to go on and under what controls."

--"Strategic intelligence is necessary, but its abuses and its failures have eroded the constitutional system of the U.S."

--"The nature of the use of intelligence in every civilization is a distinguishing bench mark of its greatness."

--"The great growth of the intelligence apparatus since World War II is antithetical to our character."

--"Abuses of covert action and counter-intelligence functions have had a corrosive effect on our society."

As Miller sees it, our present intelligence difficulties stem in large part from the nature of the 1947 and 1949 laws governing the Agency. They are "too vague, too broad, have too many loopholes and are entirely oriented toward the executive to give the maximum flexibility." This is the result of "laws drafted by military men" to fit the wartime atmosphere of confrontation. But the situation has changed. The threat is no longer the same and Congress must "frame a new charter for the intelligence agencies." The early laws permitted "abuses top and bottom" due to lack of clear guidelines and accountability by Congress and from the agencies themselves.

4. Congress, said Miller, must review all foreign policy, especially in areas of national security. To do this it must have an adequate intelligence information base available. We now lack the "procedural means for making intelligence available to Congress." There has been very little thought to this. In the future "those who oversee intelligence should be the users." A joint committee of Congress on intelligence would have very little utility unless it was a user. The intelligence community will have to face the fact that a lot "of secret activity in the past will be more exposed in the future." It must be accountable in open discussion for its activities. The new charter for the intelligence community "must provide flexibility but within a constitutional framework that does not endanger individual rights and curtail freedoms which the constitution is designed to protect."

5. Ransom's role on the panel was to critique the presentations of the other members. He challenged Walters and Cline on the extent of the present threat to our security and thus to the need for keeping our present intelligence apparatus essentially as it is. In Ransom's view, it is very easy to "oversell" strategic intelligence. This is so because it is not possible to predict human behavior any better than the social sciences as a whole can predict it today, and the social sciences are still not very good at predicting human behavior. He believed that the panelists had not stressed enough the "legitimacy crisis" that intelligence is now in. This has arisen because of the "slap dash statute" of '47 and '49 based on a wartime system that wartime leaders developed. There is now a legitimate need to review the appropriate scope and organization of the intelligence community and its activities. Ransom closed by voicing concern that the present investigations are doing very little to deal with two fundamental problems of intelligence--that of reporting what the bosses want to hear and that of the bosses ignoring what is reported.

6. In the question-and-answer period, several questioners hopped on Miller's contention that there must be "user control" of the intelligence community, arguing that this would lead to a subjective influence on the product. In answer, Miller said that he was not worried about the quality of the product but about the judgments and decisions made from it. It was quite obvious that the audience, essentially made up of intelligence officers or their partisans, were uneasy about the implication in Miller's remarks that Congress should take the main role

in controlling the community. Judging from his vague answer, Miller hasn't thought very much about the problem of just how Congress would actually exercise control of the intelligence process.

7. Another question asked was whether there was some way to determine through the intelligence process what is the nature of the real threat to this country. Ransom's answer was quite interesting. He contended that there was a real danger in letting the intelligence agencies judge the nature of the threat and that there should be some kind of outside monitoring mechanism. His solution would be to feed some of the community's budget to the academic community for cross-checking research on the community's product. Ransom said that he "feared the present monopoly of intelligence by the community would lead to manipulation of Congress." This interesting issue, unfortunately, was not pursued any further.



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